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DEAN OF THE HOUSE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

**COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES**

REPUBLICAN LEADER, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND
PUBLIC LANDS

**COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**

REPUBLICAN
STEERING COMMITTEE

September 3, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Wolf:

I want to thank the President and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for their recent actions to prioritize the Arctic and more specifically Arctic security. I was pleased to see the Presidential Memo on *Safeguarding U.S. National Interests in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions*. Alaska, which I have represented in the House for more than four decades, makes the United States an Arctic nation. Throughout my 47 years in Congress, I have been a staunch advocate to increase U.S. presence in this vital area. The release of the Air Force's *Arctic Strategy* and appointment of Jim DeHart as the new U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region demonstrates this Administration's commitment to dedicating significant planning and senior personnel attention to this region.

The loss of Icebreaker USCGC *Healy's* (WABG-20) operational capability on August 18, 2020 leaves the United States Coast Guard without any ice breaking capability in the Arctic. It is a chilling reality that the United States does not have any operational icebreaking assets given Russia's capability in the Arctic, which was on full display last week, during their Bering Strait exercise Ocean Shield 2020. Now more than ever, it is imperative that the federal government swiftly provide the requisite physical infrastructure and resources to the United States Coast Guard to restore its icebreaking capability and ensure that they can complete their missions now and into the future.

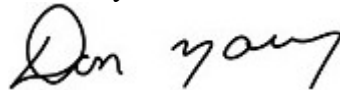
I have strongly supported the Department's program for construction of three Polar Security Cutters (PSC). However, the long lead times associated with the commissioning of these vessels, the dedicated use of the first two PSCs in the Antarctic, and the loss of the *Healy* result in an unacceptably long period where U.S. interests are underrepresented in the Arctic. Section 1 (b) (iv) and (c) of the Presidential Memo direct the Secretary to coordinate with the Secretary of State to identify available leasing options to bridge the gap and fill a glaring hole in U.S. operation capability in the Arctic.

While options for leasing of U.S. flagged heavy icebreakers are not available, there are options for available U.S. flagged medium icebreakers which could accommodate near term deployment needs. Such vessels could project U.S. presence in the Arctic and supplement the performance of vital missions. I urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to give due consideration to the leasing and deployment of available, U.S. flag medium icebreakers prior to considering the services of foreign flagged vessels. At a time when the Congress is being asked to provide trillions of dollars in support of U.S. industry and its workers it would be indefensible to leave qualified U.S. flagged, U.S. crewed icebreakers on the sidelines.

Now is the time to seize the opportunity lease available American assets that allow the Coast Guard to do its job in the U.S. Arctic. I urge you to take a more practical and realistic approach than past administrations. Such a commonsense approach is especially important with the loss of the *Healy* for the foreseeable future.

I spoke this week with Admiral Schultz, Commandant U.S. Coast Guard, and I was encouraged by the Coast Guard's receptiveness to this course of action. I ask that you coordinate as necessary and communicate with my office on any Congressional needs to facilitate this proposal. I thank you for your consideration and for your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Don" and last name "Young" clearly distinguishable.

DON YOUNG
Congressman for All Alaska

cc: Admiral Karl Schultz, Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard
cc: Russell Vought, Director, Office of Management and Budget

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